U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Mr. T. Swann Harding

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CONDENSED HISTORY OF THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

(This material was prepared for a lecture which was delivered by T. Swann Harding before various USDA Clubs of Department employees in the various cities, and was also used frequently as an orientation talk.)

Had you entered the Department on the day it was founded you would have needed very little orientation. You could have become acquainted with everybody very easily. By the time you had shaken hands with the new Commissioner and his four or five assistants and aids you would have met all the Government employees who worked in the field of agriculture. You would have found them all in two rooms. Today you would tire yourself out trying to shake hands with our 60,000 employees, even if you didn't also have to run all over the United States to do it. But great oaks from little acorns grow, and it is quite proper to say that the present Department of Agriculture grew from mere seed.

The seed were those of plants of economic value to American farmers. Both plants and seed were distributed to facilitate the propagation in this new and rapidly expanding country of crops brought from afar but that could be adapted here. Plant exploration and importation were the earliest form of agricultural activity in which our Government engaged, the gathering and dissemination of agricultural statistics being second.

In early days, there was scant need for a Department of Agriculture, and we had none. We had a vast wilderness of land, rivers, and forests to open to settlement and cultivation. When land wore out in one place it was always possible for farmers to move on to even richer and more productive land somewhere else. Agriculture was a way of living, not a way of making a living. Methods of transportation; food processing and preservation and commercial marketing were all largely in the future. Farmers aimed to be self-subsistent. They depended upon others than themselves for very little.

But even in those days, in fact even in Colonial times, far-sighted individuals later to be known as Founding Fathers---Franklin and Jefferson among them, interested themselves when abroad in sending back to this country seeds, cuttings, and specimens of plants and trees which they thought might turn out to be valuable here agriculturally. George Washington also, as early as 1794, was a member of the British Agricultural Board, and he long corresponded with Sir John Sinclair, its founder and president.

In 1796, George Washington recommended to Congress that funds be provided for the promotion of agriculture. As our young Nation got under way and established a Department of State it became natural for consular officers to aid in the seed work. The Navy was also called upon to bring back plants and seeds. Gradually the habit arose of depositing these in the Patent Office, which was the nearest thing to a scientific agency in the young Government, and which formed part of the Department of State until the Department of the Interior was created in 1849.

This brings us rather abruptly to Blodgett's Hotel. It once stood in downtown Washington at 7th and E Sts., N. W. It resulted from a movement started in 1795 to give Washington a decent hotel--an achievement not yet accomplished, according to some. Both its site and its architecture were the result of lotteries. The site once formed part of the farm of John Orr which, before that time, extended from 7th and F Sts., N. W., as far out as the Public Library at 7th and K. The fishing was excellent at 14th and K in those days, and for some years thereafter.

When completed, Blodgett's Hotel occupied only part of its lot. It did not even fill the entire E Street side of the square. Within it was a theatre in which the first Washington theatrical performance was staged. At this time the entire Federal Government was crowded into a single 25-room building. You probably know what happened next without being told. The crowding became intolerable and in 1810 Blodgett's Hotel was purchased to relieve the congestion. Thereupon the Post Office Department, the City Post Office, and the Patent Office, were moved into it.

Dr. Thornton was then Commissioner of Patents. As late as 1822 he received only $1,500 a year, his clerk $1,000, his messenger $250, and that was his entire staff. Patents were merely registered without required proof of priority but the President himself and members of his Cabinet did not pass upon them then as had been the case in earlier days. Blodgett's Hotel narrowly escaped destruction by fire in 1814, when Washington was invaded, but Dr. Thornton's eloquence prevailed upon Col. Jones, leader of a British conflagration squad, to spare it because of the cultural value of the Patent Office's collection on the top floor. The British were then retaliating for similar destruction by our forces in Canada.

This maneuver enabled us later to burn the place down for ourselves. Before that happened Henry L. Ellsworth, son of the distinguished third Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and himself a man of notable intellectual and agricultural attainments, became Commissioner of Patents. On December 15, 1836, six months after a new patent law went into effect which brought order out of chaos, Blodgett's Hotel caught fire. Ineffectual efforts of the staff to save it delayed arrival of professional fire fighters. The fire got beyond control. The records and models, including those of Robert Fulton's Clermont, went up in flames.

Conditions in Washington about this time may be surmised from the following item in a local paper dated April 21, 1836: "The ill-fated man who was thrown down by a hog opposite the General Post Office on Thursday, as mentioned in our last, died on Saturday from the severe injury he sustained, his skull being fractured by that infamous incident." Obviously the Department of Agriculture was even then trying to make its way into the Government on four legs and disguised as a pig!

Commissioner Ellsworth took unusual interest in agricultural patents and statistics, and in the collection and dissemination of plants and seeds of economic value. For a considerable time he carried on without specific authorization by the Congress, simply because so many farm people desired the services he offered. This apparently aroused some Congressional suspicion for Chairman Fletcher of the House Committee on Patents wrote Ellsworth in late 1838 asking what he was up to anyway. His reply, dated January 22, 1839, was so well made that the Congress gave him permission to spend $1,000 of the incoming funds of the Patent Office, which has always been self-supporting, on agricultural matters. This sum was expected to last some years, and it did!

As early as that new varieties of seed had helped the corn growers and new varieties of wheat had extended the area in which that grain could be grown in this country. Ellsworth felt that extension of such work could easily improve the income of American farmers by fifteen or twenty million dollars annually. He also observed that a new era of labor-saving machinery was at hand for, though we are prone to forget it, technology was already effecting great changes in American agriculture and portended still more to come.

Ellsworth finally argued that some place in Washington should be designated as the repository of plants and seeds collected abroad. It should have facilities to get these from the ports where the Navy often left them to dry out or rot. Being a good bureaucrat he naturally nominated the Patent Office as the place of collection and distribution. In his annual report for 1840 he announced the expenditure of $451.58 on the collection and distribution of agricultural seeds and statistics, and observed that 30,000 packages of seed had been distributed during that year.

Ellsworth wrote exceedingly interesting reports. In fact John Quincy Adams once half querulously complained that the Patent Office reports proved so interesting to him as to absorb him on one occasion to make him forget an appointment for four hours. Popular interest in the reports moved the Congress to print 25,000 of them for distribution.

Of course various agricultural societies already existed. They necessarily exerted pressure on Government for aid to farmers. The House of Representatives established an agricultural committee as early as 1820 and the Senate in 1825. In 1828, the Congress authorized publication of a manual, prepared at its direction by Secretary of the Treasury Benjamin Rush, on the growth and manufacture of silk. In the same year it directed that Count Von Hazzi's Treatise on the Rearing of Silk-Worms be printed as a document.

In 1830, the House authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to finance a project for the cultivation of sugarcane and the manufacture and refinement of sugar. The investigations were conducted by Prof. Benjamin Silliman of Yale. The results appeared in 1833. Thus Congress itself initiated the first piece of agricultural research authorized by Government and issued the first agricultural bulletins.

Before Blodgett's Hotel burned, the Congress had appropriated money to build a new Patent Office. This structure still stands and is now occupied by the Civil Service Commission. The F Street side of it was completed in 1840, but Commissioner Ellsworth, as he complained in his annual report, was delayed in gaining occupancy because the building had to serve as temporary quarters of a new institution founded by an Englishman named Smithson. He did get a foothold in the building, however, and by 1844 had his entire Office there, and the Smithsonian Institution outside. He then said it would serve the purpose for many years. Four years later the building was overcrowded, an east wing was added by 1852, a west wing by 1856, and the G Street wing in 1867.

In 1849 the Department of the Interior was created with Thomas Ewing as its first Secretary. He established himself in a single room of the Patent Office building. Shortly thereafter he and his Department had crowded everything else out of the place. The Patent Office formed part of his new Department and it spilled over across the street into the old building now occupied by the United States Tariff Commission, the south wing of which actually stands upon the former site of Blodgett's Hotel. It was started in 1839, completed in 1866, and housed the Post Office Department and the City Post Office.

Henry Adams in his Education of Henry Adams, wrote that, in 1850, "The white marble columns and fronts of the Post Office and the Patent Office faced each other, like white Greek temples in the abandoned gravel pits of a deserted Syrian city." They still stand there facing one another, though the gravel pits are gone, they are no longer so white, and the city is too far from deserted to suit most of its present inhabitants.

Though some Commissioners of Patents who followed Ellsworth were by no means so well equipped agriculturally and by experience as he was, agricultural work continued to grow in the Patent Office. About 1850 a "practical and scientific agriculturist" was hired to write an annual report on agricultural matters which filled a fair-sized book each year. Ultimately a botanist and an entomologist came to be employed part-time, while the meteorological reports of the Smithsonian Institution found a place in the annual agricultural volume. Meanwhile, as agriculture became commercialized, food processing advanced, and transportation improved, the farmer's problems became more complex.

Then Patent Office agricultural aid began to prove insufficient. Agitation for better service of Government to agriculture increased both among farm organizations of the day and individuals. Several things were desired and they tied together. One was a law authorizing equitable distribution of public lands; another was aid to agricultural education; a third was a Federal Government agency to serve farmers. In 1852 the United States Agricultural Society was formed. It was primarily a pressure group or lobby to direct official interest to the agricultural needs of the time. Many of its members were prominent and the society insisted that a national Department of Agriculture be established. When it was, the society dissolved.

There was delay, of course. That was because members of Congress from the South were suspicious of Federal aid to the States. During Buchanan's Administration, a bill to endow the States with public land enough to enable them to set up agricultural colleges was vetoed because Buchanan also did not think the Federal Government had any right to extend aid to the States in this way. But during Lincoln's Administration the Southern delegation to Congress mysteriously vanished.

In his annual report for 1861, Caleb B. Smith, Secretary of the Interior, rather perfunctorily suggested that a Bureau of Agriculture and Statistics be founded as part of his Department. Lincoln repeated this suggestion almost verbatim in his message to Congress of December 2, 1861. He sandwiched the recommendation in off-handedly and casually. But Congress took action and, after some rather diffident debate as to whether a Cabinet officer should head the new Department, it voted an agency with an anomalous bureau status supervised by a Commissioner. The act founding the Department was signed May 15, 1862.

The Homestead Act, which made provision for the apportionment of freehold farms of 160 acres each from the public domain, to all citizens who would make homes on them and till them for 5 years, followed 5 days later. On July 2, 1862, the Land-Grant College Act became law, endowing the agricultural colleges with 11,000,000 acres--about the area of Vermont--which the States were authorized to sell, using the proceeds to set up the schools.

It cannot be said that the Department's founding resulted from any deep conviction on Lincoln's part nor did anyone at that time think out or formulate any well-planned program for the Department to follow. Lincoln did not think of himself as a farmer and had little agrarian interest. The Department's beginning was almost casual. Since the Patent Office by now had an agricultural division, it was natural that the head of this should become the first Commissioner of Agriculture, and so he did. The Department was organized in two basement rooms of the Patent Office Building.

The first Commissioner was Isaac Newton, a Pennsylvanian of Quaker stock. He had been manager of two model farms not very far from Philadelphia and had won himself quite a reputation. He was also a local politician of some note. He operated a confectionery and creamery in Philadelphia from which, among other things, he shipped butter to the White House. Just before the Civil War he purchased a farm in Virginia, but his wife refused to move there, so he tried to manage it by remote control through a brother. The Civil War and malaria bankrupted the enterprise and, since Newton was out of a job, his friends suggested that he try to get on the Government payroll.

Newton did just that. He moved to Washington, met the right people, and soon became both a friend of Lincoln and head of the agricultural work in the Patent Office. Naturally Lincoln made him head of the new Department of Agriculture. During part of the Civil War Newton was in residence at the White House to supervise the food eaten by the President and guard it against poisoning. While there he became a friend and confident of Mrs. Lincoln who not only shared with him her lavish and frequent troubles but sought his aid in paying department store bills she imprudently ran up. This he did either by settling them out of his own pocket and letting her pay him back in installments, if they were not too large, or by interceding for her with Lincoln which required considerable tact and diplomacy.

It is difficult to assay Newton at this late date. He had loyal friends and venomous enemies. Some extolled his learning and his wisdom; others insisted he was all but illiterate and so incompetent that he could not satisfactorily perform his duties. Farm journals in general paid little attention to the Department and newspapers practically none, but Newton was often attacked in print and speech.

True, when Newton was accused of wasting Government funds, one farm editor vigorously denied this and then went on to say that even if the charge were true he thanked God farmers had at last got near enough that "great public crib at Washington" to waste a pittance. He continued: "I care not, in this view of the case, if they have spent all the money in distributing dead rats and Canadian Thistles."

However, Lincoln stolidly disregarded adverse criticism of his friend Newton, though Newton actually was to have been dismissed by President Johnson for incompetence - his successor was nominated but not confirmed - but was saved in part by an unhappy accident. As he sat in his office one warm summer day in 1866 he heard an approaching thunderstorm. He remembered certain wheat samples that had been cut but not stored on the Department's experiment grounds over on the site of the Department's present buildings. He clapped on his silk hat and rushed over two miles to supervise the saving of these samples. He stood there, doubtless in a frock coat, and oversaw the job. The Washington July sun did the rest. Newton suffered sunstroke and, though he lingered almost a year, he was never much good after that.

Newton's primary aim was to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before. He appointed a botanist, an entomologist, a chemist, and a statistician. He sought to carry out the aims of the organic act founding the Department, and that law was as broad in scope as all outdoors. He sought to collect, arrange, and publish valuable agricultural information; to collect and introduce valuable seeds, plants, and animals; to promote chemistry, botany, and entomology; and to establish a Library and a Museum.

Newton wrote his reports in a flowing somewhat pedantic style with a wealth of classical allusions. The propagating garden was established and the 40-acre tract between 12th and 14th Streets, S. W., B. St., and the Canal, called Reservation No. 2, was finally wrested from the Army, which long kept cattle on it, and turned to use as an experiment farm. By 1868 the Department of Agriculture had on it a building of its own, the old Red Brick Building, torn down in 1930, you will hear oldsters talk about. It cost $140,420, including furniture and equipment. The Department had less than 50 employees in January of that year.

The work continued, tending to attract the attention of few but the gentleman farmers. Most of Newton's immediate successors were ill-qualified to lend the Department prestige and to extend its field of usefulness. The Department also had very limited funds, and these went largely for free seed distribution. Then Norman J. Colman became Commissioner of Agriculture in April 1885.

By that time there was widespread agitation both for the founding and support of agricultural experiment stations in the different States by Federal aid and for raising the head of the Department of Agriculture to Cabinet rank. Colman actively supported both movements. In 1887 the experiment station law was passed and, in 1889, Colman became the first Secretary of Agriculture from February 13 to March 6, when Jeremiah M. Rusk was appointed by the incoming President Harrison.

At this point the Department began really to gain status and significance. It also began to grow much more rapidly both in size and in service. Because of increasing complexities of the agricultural enterprise, farmers found it more and more necessary to have in Washington a strong, reliable Department to serve them.

In 1884 the Bureau of Animal Industry was founded in response to a special Act of Congress authorizing its establishment to aid in the eradication of animal diseases. In 1888 the Office of Experiment Stations came into existence to undertake the work assigned to the Department in connection with the Hatch or Experiment Station Act. In 1890 the Weather Bureau was transferred to the Department from the War Department where it had existed in the Army Signal Corps since its creation in 1870.

In March 1897 James (Tama Jim) Wilson became Secretary of Agriculture. He served until March 1913. His administration was outstanding for the development of research and increase in the number of scientists employed by the Department. He indeed enabled the Department to carry out Newton's dictum about two blades of grass growing where one grew before.

In 1901 Wilson formed the Bureaus of Soils, Plant Industry, Forestry, and Chemistry, and in 1904 the Bureau of Entomology. The Office of Public Roads was created in 1905. In 1906 came the Bureau of Biological Survey, which arose out of work in economic ornithology and mammalogy which began in the Division of Entomology. The East and West Wings of the present Administration Building were also erected while Wilson was Secretary.

Work in many other lines was undertaken, among them agricultural engineering, dairying, irrigation, drainage, marketing, extension work, and agricultural economics and statistics. By 1910 the problem of distribution enhanced agricultural production was already attaining importance.

The growth of the Department during Secretary Wilson's administration was remarkable. Whereas there were only about two thousand employees in 1897, of whom over 400 were women, the Department had 2,514 employees in Washington alone and 10,190 in the field by the end of Secretary Wilson's term. A regiment of those new hired hands consisted of scientists working in all fields to aid agriculture.

In a sense it may be said those scientists succeeded too well. They enabled farmers to produce so efficiently that market and credit conditions became increasingly unbalanced. New varieties of plants and animals, new methods of protecting them from insects and disease, new techniques of cultivation and soil enrichment flowed from the Department's laboratories.

Various regulatory laws began to be passed and turned over to the Department for enforcement, the meat inspection, the animal quarantine, and the food and drugs acts being examples. When the national forests were turned over to it in 1905, the Department also undertook custodial functions of wide scope. Step by step the will of the people as transmitted through the Congress of the United States made the Department evolve into a large and influential institution.

The term of David F. Houston who followed Wilson was chiefly remarkable for overt entrance of the social sciences into the Department. It is quite true that various studies in the fields of agricultural marketing, credit, and economics generally had been undertaken before Houston's term, but he recognized their importance and so reorganized the Department that they could function effectively.

The Federal Highway, Farm Loan, Grain Standards, Cotton Futures, Warehouse, Migratory Bird Treaty, Packers and Stockyards, and Commodity Exchange Acts were all passed during or soon after Houston's term of office. The original home-demonstration farm project, started by Seaman A. Knapp in the Bureau of Plant Industry, flowered into the Extension Service under the Smith-Lever Act of 1914. The Bureau of Agricultural Economics had its beginnings though it did not assume somewhat its present form until 1923.

Houston reorganized the Department. He set up a States Relations Service, among other things, into which went extension work, the work on human nutritution and home economics, and that with the experiment stations. In 1923 this Service was dissolved and the Office of Experiment Stations, the Extension Service, and the Bureau of Home Economics emerged as independent units. It might be said here that the Bureau of Dairy Industry was established in 1926 largely in response to outside demands.

Returning to Houston, his reports merit careful study. He was a sort of one-man New Deal in agriculture all by himself. Many of the ideas he proposed years ahead were implemented later. Had not the first world war intervened to deflect him from the more orderly processes of peace it seems apparent he would have acted to prevent the growth of disruptive forces which developed something like two decades later.

This was a dynamic period in the history of the Department. It carried over into the terms of Houston's immediate successors - Meredith, Henry C. Wallace, father of the former Vice President, and Howard M. Gore. The terms of William M. Jardine and Arthur M. Hyde, which lasted from March 5, 1925, until Henray A. Wallace became Secretary on March 4, 1933, may be regarded as a period of consolidation and Departmental unification.

During the Jardine and Hyde period the Department was welded into a unit by various organizational changes. At the same time the desperate post-war situation of the American farmer was seen clearly, analyzed wisely, and prescribed for in terms that were not to be carried out until after 1933. Study of the annual reports of Jardine and Hyde will enlighten the reader about the many sound diagnoses made and treatments suggested for the great farmer depression, which began soon after our unhealthful agricultural expansion during the first world war, and came to a climax around 1930-32. They clearly stated what should be done but were unable to do it until public opinion was reformulated and crystallized.

The administration of Henry A. Wallace brings us to modern times. It was characterized primarily by creation of the "action" agencies. Originally information in the field of agriculture was collected and kept on tap for the asking. Those who did not ask got little of it. The upper class of more intelligent farmers profited by it. The next step was taken in the administration of Secretary Rusk who appreciated the urgent necessity for publishing the information in popular, usable form, and who first issued press releases and farmers' bulletins.

This gave farmers knowledge about how to produce larger crops with less labor and more certainty. That, in turn, induced more of them to go further into commercial agriculture than ever before and thus to become dependent upon transportation, labor, market, credit, land-value, and equipment factors not wholly within their control. Difficulties arose and the next step was to institute demonstration farms and to take knowledge about agricultural matters to the farmer's home using the Extension Service.

At the same time marketing and credit studies led to legislative acts which improved farm markets and credit facilities. The first world war crammed a generation of progress into a few years, resulted in opening land to cultivation which should never have gone out of grass or pasture, produced a tremendous inflation in farm prices and land values, and led to an inevitable deflation which bankrupted farmers and left them producing food and fiber for the rest of us at a discount. The action agencies tried to make it financially possible for farmers to take advantage of the most up-to-date agricultural knowledge in order to rehabilitate themselves while producing abundance for effective consumer demand.

A brave effort was made on many fronts to right farmer wrongs after 1933, -- insofar as Government agencies in Washington could do the job within the frame of reference set up by public opinion and legislative enactment. No such procedure can be dictatorial in this country, for we proceed by democratic processes. What our Government actually does in any given case is always the resultant of many conflicting forces. The conflicts must be resolved as best possible and we then proceed to do what we can. We cannot evolve a perfect system in Washington and inflict it on the country, nor would any such system be perfect anyway.

Before we could solve our farm problem or give farmers parity prices, i.e. prices enabling them to get as much manufactured goods for their farm commodities as they did in stated pre-first-world-war years, a second world war descended on us. Claude R. Wickard became Secretary September 5, 1940. The National Defense Program got under way. The Secretary quickly saw its significance in raising consumer income and immediately began to preach greater hog production and more marketing of beef in 1941.

Early in that year, as you doubtless know, the British suddenly called upon us for sufficient concentrated protein foods to supply one-fourth of their population. If they did not get this food they faced malnutrition, lowered morale, and disaster. The Lend-Lease Act was passed. The Food For Freedom program promptly got under way. Our farm plant underwent inventory and production goals were set up, marks at which farmers were asked to shoot in order to produce what we ourselves and our potential allies needed.

War followed in December 1941, the goals were reassayed and reannounced, with marked emphasis on oil crops and other wartime needs, in January 1942. Those goals were achieved in a year of record production for all time. Other goals set up in 1942 were achieved in 1943. There is no need to dwell on these matters as they are all of recent occurrence.

Finally, we should consider Departmental reorganization in recent years. During the period immediately following 1933 many new agencies were created. Some, like the Agricultural Adjustment Agency were immediately part of the Department. Others, like Commodity Credit Corporation, Farm Credit Administration, Farm Security Administration, Rural Electrification Administration, and Soil Conservation Service began life elsewhere and came into the Department later. Also between 1938 and 1940 four agencies which had long been part of the Department were transferred elsewhere: The Bureau of Public Roads, the Food and Drug Administration, the Bureau of Biological Survey, and the Weather Bureau.

On December 13, 1941, there was announced a major reorganization of the Department to streamline it for the war effort. This reorganization was validated by Executive Order February 23, 1942.

It was at that time that seven scientific bureaus were consolidated into the Agricultural Research Administration. The Agricultural Adjustment Agency, the Soil Conservation Service, the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, and the Sugar Division went into the Agricultural Conservation and Adjustment Administration, while the activities of the Surplus Marketing Administration, the Commodity Exchange Administration, most of the Agricultural Marketing Service, and the Consumers' Counsel Division of the Agricultural Adjustment Agency were combined in the Agricultural Marketing Administration.

The Commodity Credit Corporation, the Farm Security Administration, the Forest Service, the Farm Credit Administration, the Rural Electrification Administration, and the staff agencies remained unaffected by this reorganization. In June 1942, the Foods Requirements Committee, since abolished, and the Combined Food Board were set up, the latter with the Secretary of Agriculture as United States representative.

The Executive Order of December 5, 1942, which delegated to the Secretary of Agriculture full responsibility for our entire national wartime food program, made necessary a further departmental reorganization. So, on December 10, the Food Production Administration and the Food Distribution Administration were established. At this time there was also a transfer of personnel to the Department from both the War Production Board and the Office of Civilian Supply. This transfer rounded out the two new big Administrations. The status of the Agricultural Research Administration, the Commodity Credit Corporation, the Forest Service, and the Rural Electrification Administration remained unchanged. Again the staff agencies were not involved.

The following departmental agencies were consolidated into the Food Production Administration: The Agricultural Conservation and Adjustment Administration (except the Sugar Agency), the Farm Credit Administration, the Farm Security Administration, that part of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics concerned primarily with planning current production, that part of the Office for Agricultural War Relations concerned primarily with food production, and the Office of Land Use Coordination.

Consolidated into the Food Distribution Administration were: The Agricultural Marketing Administration, the Sugar Agency, certain of the regulatory activities of the Bureau of Animal Industry, and that part of the Office for Agricultural War Relations concerned primarily with food distribution. This essentially marked the end of the last-named Office which had been created in response to a letter from the President dated May 5, 1941, and was originally named the Office for Agricultural Defense Relations.

The Nutrition Division of the Office of Defense Health and Welfare Services was transferred to the Food Distribution Administration by Executive Order, effective March 24, 1943.

So far, the tie-in between the new and the old line agencies was largely through committees and by direct contact through the Secretary. The next step thereafter was the establishment of the War Food Administration pursuant to the Executive Order of March 26 which was modified, clarified, and amended by an additional order issued April 19.

At this time the President consolidated into one unit the Food Production Administration (except the Farm Credit Administration, which again became a line agency of the Department), the Food Distribution Administration, the Commodity Credit Corporation, and the Extension Service of the Department of Agriculture into what was first called a Food Production and Distribution Administration, but was renamed the War Food Administration April 19. In this combination the legal status of the Extension Service and its cooperative work with the States, remained unaffected.

This was essentially a wartime emergency measure by which the line agencies of the Department of Agriculture were grouped into two administrative units, each headed by an official appointed by and directly responsible to the President, the Secretary of Agriculture and the War Food Administrator. The former remained in charge of the Agricultural Research Administration, the Farm Credit Administration, the Rural Electrification Administration, and the Forest Service. The latter headed the War Food Administration. The Department's staff agencies served both the Administration and the Department as called upon, the same identical agencies servicing both. These units then were:

The Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the Office of Budget and Finance, the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, the Office of Information, the Library, the Office of Personnel, the Office of the Solicitor, and the Office of Plant and Operations. The Office of Land Use Coordination was abolished January 1, 1944, and the Land Use Coordinator entered the Office of the Secretary.

The immediate staff of the War Food Administration remained small. The War Services Branch of the Food Production Administration was transferred to the Office of the War Food Administrator on May 27, 1943. An Office of Labor was established June 23, 1943, which took over entire responsibility for carrying out all farm labor, wage-stabilization, and manpower programs. An Office of Materials and Facilities was set up to direct supply activities in this field, on May 10. An Office of Transportation to coordinate the transportation work of the various agencies in WFA was set up on May 17 and, on December 1, it became a staff agency. An Office of War Board Services, a liaison office for the boards, was created on August 25, 1943, but was discontinued December 30, 1943. The National War Board was created September 1, its Chairman now performing the functions of the former Office of War Board Services.

Executive Order 9334 was amended October 29 and the Combined Food Board was reconstituted with the War Food Administrator as United States representative, a Canadian in addition to the British member, and the Secretary of Agriculture as neutral chairman. At the same time both the Food Advisory Committee and the Inter-Agency Allocations Committee were abolished. Their functions were combined and transferred to a newly created Food Requirements and Allocations Committee of the War Food Administration.

On January 21, 1944, the Food Distribution Administration and the Food Production Administration were renamed the Office of Distribution and the Office of Production, respectively. An Office of Price was also established to supervise functions relating to the approval of maximum prices of, and price-support program for, agricultural commodities. At this time the Agricultural Adjustment Agency, the Farm Security Administration, and the Soil Conservation Service, became independent agencies in the War Food Administration.

Administrator's Memorandum 27, Revision 1, December 13, 1944, as amended January 5, 1945, ushered in a major reorganization of the War Food Administration. The Office of Distribution and the Office of Production were abolished. Most of the remaining work of the latter went to the Agricultural Adjustment Agency, a little to Soil Conservation Service. The Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, which had reported administratively to the Director of Production, became an independent program agency of WFA.

In a sense the Office of Distribution was torn functionally in twain. To an Office of Marketing Services went the ordinary peacetime activities of the former Office of Distribution, those concerned with regulatory inspection, and service statutes, compliance activities, civilian food requirements, as well as maximum price and rationing regulations, and much work concerned with War Food Order Programs.

An Office of Supply was created to handle matters relating to requirements and allocations control, program liaison, procurement and price support, shipping and storage, plant facilities and financing, the requisitioning of food and acquisition of property, the administration of the War Food Orders, and subsidy operations. An Office of Basic Commodities was created which took over the functions of the Cotton, Grain, General Crops, Hemp, Oilseeds, and Sugar Divisions of the Commodity Credit Corporation.

But, by an amendment of January 5, mentioned above, the last two mentioned offices became part of the Commodity Credit Corporation, each being administered by a vice president thereof. Under the vice president in charge of activities at first assigned the Director of Supply was also placed the school lunch and direct distribution programs originally placed in the Office of Marketing Services. All these changes became effective January 1, 1945.

The following agencies were then responsible to the Secretary of Agriculture: Agricultural Research Administration, Forest Service, Rural Electrification Administration, and Farm Credit Administration. The Land Use Coordinator was placed in the Office of the Secretary.

The War Food Administration then comprised the following staff agencies: Office of Investigatory Services, Office of Price, Office of Surplus Property and Reconversion, Office of Requirements and Allocations, Office of Transportation, Office of Water Utilization, Office of Home Food Supply, and the National War Board.

The following units then functioned as independent program agencies within the War Food Administration: Agricultural Adjustment Agency, Commodity Credit Corporation, Extension Service, Farm Security Administration, Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, Office of Labor, Office of Marketing Services, Office of Materials and Facilities, and Soil Conservation Service.

The Department of Agriculture and the War Food Administration were closely integrated not only by the fact that the Under Secretary of Agriculture was also First Assistant War Food Administrator, but by the authority the Secretary and the Administrator had to exercise any and all powers vested in the other, by statute or otherwise, to the extent that was necessary to enable them to perform their respective duties and functions. Mutual services by the staff offices and the constitution and functions of various committees acted as further tie-ins and lines of coordination.

This situation was neither unique nor unprecedented. When the Bureau of Animal Industry was created with bureau status in 1884, it was placed in a Department which had but bureau status itself. That came out all right. The head of the Weather Bureau, which came to the Department in 1890, was always a Presidential appointee. When the United States Food Administration was created during World War I, some wondered just what this portended for the Department's future and the same kind of thoughts arose when the Farm Board was set up in 1929. Again, there were those who feared the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and other "action" agencies might swallow the Department whole. None of these things actually happened. The Department survived.

So it was not unexpected when Executive Order 9577, dated June 29, 1945, terminated the War Food Administration, at the request of the War Food Administrator, and transferred WFA and the Office of the Administrator to the Secretary of Agriculture. Orders, rules, directives, and regulations of WFA remained in full force until modified or revoked by the Secretary. Secretary's Memorandum 1106, July 3, 1945, took note of the provisions of the above Executive Order, effected the required transfers, and named the new assistants in the Office of the Secretary and the Committee on Organization, which planned necessary organizational changes in the Department's structure after mature consideration.

On August 18, 1945, the Secretary announced the creation of Production and Marketing Administration which represented a consolidation of the Office of Basic Commodities, the Office of Supply, the Office of the President of the Commodity Credit Corporation, the Offices of the Manager and the Secretary of the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, the Office of Marketing Services, the Agricultural Adjustment Agency, the Office of Requirements and Allocations, the Office of Price, the Office of Transportation, the Office of Materials and Facilities, the Office of Labor, the Office of Home Food Supply, the Office of Investigatory Services, and the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation which is in process of liquidation. The new agency was organized on a commodity basis. Internal reorganization of PMA was effected as of April 1, 1947, pursuant to a Secretary's Memorandum dated the previous March 19.

The agency's activities now concerned or comprised Production, Marketing, Commodity Credit Corporation, Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, and the Administrative Management required. Production included agricultural conservation and adjustment programs, farm marketing quotas, farm labor supply, and other programs dealing with farmers through State and county commodities: marketing activities include research, inspection, service, distribution, and regulatory programs related thereto. Agricultural Conservation Program, Labor, Food Distribution Program, Marketing Facilities, Price Support and Foreigh Supply, Fiscal, and Shipping and Storage Branches were established.

These, with the commodity branches, the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, the Commodity Credit Corporation, Administrative Management, and certain staff agencies now comprised PMA. The following were abolished: Special Commodities Branch, Materials and Equipment Branch, Office of Requirements and Allocations, Office of Foreign Programs Coordination, and Office of Price. The Commodity Exchange Authority became an independent agency by provision of Secretary's Memorandum issued January 21, 1947. The Federal Crop Insurance Corporation became a separate organizational entity July 1, 1947, and a Marketing Research Branch was created in PMA the following August 8.

Memorandum 1139, December 12, 1945 reorganized the Bureau of Agricultural Economics as the Department's main agency for the collection and dissemination of agricultural statistics, the performance of economic research, and dissemination of the results thereof. At this time responsibility for leadership in general agricultural program planning was transferred to the Office of the Secretary. A Situation and Outlook Board was established in BAE and, under Memorandum 1140, also issued December 12, 1945, a Policy and Program Committee was created for continual review of the Department's policies and programs.

On August 14, 1946, two important laws relating to the Department's activities were signed by the President. One of these was the Research and Marketing Act, to provide for further research into basic laws and principles relating to agriculture, to improve and facilitate the marketing and distribution of agricultural products, and to give agriculture parity with industry in the field of research. An Administrator of Research and Marketing Act, was designated by Secretary's Memorandum 1199, July 18, 1947. The other was the Farmers Home Administration Act of 1946, which repealed the act authorizing the Farm Credit Administration to make emergency crop-production, feed, seed and harvesting loans and abolished the Farm Security Administration as such, but established a Farmers Home Administration to carry on the abovementioned FCA responsibilities, to perform many of the services formerly performed by FSA, to provide a program of insured farm mortgages for rural people, and to assume certain other specified responsibilities.

The Department played a major role in the Famine Emergency Campaign, launched by the President in February 1946, as well as in the Food and Feed Conservation Program launched the following year. A staff Office for Food and Feed Conservation was established by Secretary's Memorandum 1204, January 27, 1948. A domestic all-out effort for maximum farm production continued. Activities under the Research and Marketing Act rapidly increased, and the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in Mexico engaged considerable Departmental activity and attention. The Farm Labor Camps underwent liquidation in accordance with an Act of Congress passed July 31, 1947. The Farm Grain Saving Campaign was officially announced October 3, following, and was vigorously pursued thereafter.

As of April 15, 1948 the Department of Agriculture consisted of the following research and program agencies: Agricultural Research Administration, Commodity Exchange Authority, Extension Service, Farm Credit Administration, Farmers Home Administration, Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, Forest Service, Production and Marketing Administration, Rural Electrification Administration, and Soil Conservation Service. These are served by the following staff units: Administrator Research and Marketing Act, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Office of Budget and Finance, Office of Food and Feed Conservation, Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, Office of Hearing Examiners, Office of Information, Library, Office of Personnel, Office of Plant and Operations, Office of the Solicitor. A Chief Liaison Officer on European Recovery was designated by Secretary's Memorandum 1211, March 25, 1948.

The attached block chart shows the Department's organization as it was January 2, 1948.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

APPROVED: Clinton P. Anderson
Secretary of Agriculture

DATE: JAN 2, 1948

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

- OFFICE OF PERSONNEL
- OFFICE OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
- OFFICE OF PLANT AND OPERATIONS
- OFFICE OF INFORMATION
- ADMINISTRATOR RESEARCH AND MARKETING ACT
- OFFICE OF THE SOLICITOR
- OFFICE OF HEARING EXAMINERS
- LIBRARY
- BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS
- OFFICE OF FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL RELATIONS
- EXTENSION SERVICE
- COMMODITY EXCHANGE AUTHORITY
- FEDERAL CROP INSURANCE CORPORATION
- RURAL ELECTRIFICATION ADMINISTRATION

FOREST SERVICE

- NATIONAL FOREST DIVISIONS
- LAND ACQUISITION PLANNING DIVISIONS
- STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY DIVISIONS
- FOREST RESEARCH DIVISIONS
- SERVICE DIVISIONS

SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

- OPERATIONS DIVISIONS
- RESEARCH DIVISIONS
- SERVICE DIVISIONS

FARMERS HOME ADMINISTRATION

- FARM OWNERSHIP DIVISION
- PRODUCTION LOANS DIVISION
- SERVICE DIVISIONS

PRODUCTION AND MARKETING ADMINISTRATION

- ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR FOR PRODUCTION
  - Agricultural Conservation Programs Branch
  - Aerial Photo. & Engr. Service
  - State & County Offices
- ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR FOR COMMODITY CREDIT CORP.
  - Fiscal Branch
  - Price Support & Foreign Supply Branch
  - Shipping and Storage Branch
- ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR FOR MARKETING
  - Food Distribution Programs Branch
  - Marketing Facilities Branch
  - Marketing Research Branch
- Office of Audit
- Informatio Branch
- Compliance and Investigations Branch
- Budget and Management Branch
- Cotton Branch 1/
- Fats and Oils Branch 1/
- Grain Branch 1/
- Poultry Branch 1/
- Tobacco Branch 1/
- Dairy Branch 1/
- Fruit and Vegetable Branch 1/
- Livestock Branch 1/
- Sugar Branch 1/

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

- OFFICE OF EXPERIMENT STATIONS
- BUREAU OF ANIMAL INDUSTRY
- BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL CHEMISTRY
- BUREAU OF DAIRY INDUSTRY
- BUREAU OF ENTOMOLOGY AND PLANT QUARANTINE
- BUREAU OF HUMAN NUTRITION AND HOME ECONOMICS
- BUR. OF PLANT INDUSTRY, SOILS AND AGR. ENGINEERING
- AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH CENTER

FARM CREDIT ADMINISTRATION

- LAND BANK DIVISION
- INTERMEDIATE CREDIT DIVISION
- PRODUCTION CREDIT DIVISION
- COOPERATIVE DIVISION
- SERVICE DIVISIONS

1/ The commodity branches are under the general direction of the Administrator and are responsible to the appropriate Assistant Administrator for functional activities.

Prepared in
Division of Organization and Personnel Management
Office of Personnel